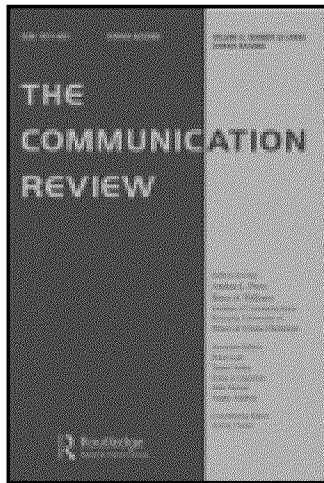


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Status Control: An Admonition Concerning the Publicized Privacy of Social Networking

John M. Sloop^a & Joshua Gunn^b

^a Department of Communication Studies, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, USA

^b Department of Communication Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, USA

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Status Control: An Admonition Concerning the Publicized Privacy of Social Networking

JOHN M. SLOOP

Department of Communication Studies, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, USA

JOSHUA GUNN

*Department of Communication Studies, The University of Texas at Austin,
Austin, Texas, USA*

Building on—and updating—Raymond Williams’ (1974) influential analysis of mobile privatization, the authors investigate the ways in which public and private are reconfigured as a result of the widespread use of new mobile technologies and social networking. Although the new-media landscape has been interpreted by many as symptomatic of a control society, the authors focus on the ways in which disciplinary logics continue to operate. Drawing on a number of contemporary cases, the authors focus especially on the ways new media technologies and practices—such as social networking—promote techniques of surveillance and discipline, in part by encouraging participants to confuse their public statements with private expressions.

Welcome my son, welcome to the machine.

What did you dream? It’s alright[,] we told you what to dream.

—Pink Floyd, “Welcome to the Machine” (1975)

Pink Floyd’s familiar musical critiques of the (now largely defunct) record industry often center on a fantasy of a conspiratorial surveillance: Greedy moguls rhetorically question a naïve, young musician, “Where have you been?” only to patronizingly respond, “It’s alright, we know where you’ve been.” The music-machinists later admit to seeding the artist’s dreams (“You dreamed of a big star/He played a mean guitar/He always ate in the Steak

Address correspondence to John M. Sloop, Department of Communication Studies, College of Arts and Science, 311 Kirkland Hall, 2201 West End Avenue, Vanderbilt University Nashville, TN 37240, USA. E-mail: john.m.sloop@vanderbilt.edu

Bar/He loved to drive in his Jaguar”), prefiguring the fantasy work of the postmodern sci-fi machine to come at century’s end (e.g., *The Matrix*).

As Jodi Dean (2002) suggests, in fantasies of conspiratorial surveillance like the Pink Floyd song, “something important is always hidden,” there is some “secret that must be revealed” (p. 49). Whether or not the revelation is fictive or presumably real, part of the pleasure of fantasies of conspiracy and surveillance concern their exposure of the machineries of power: Behind the cloak music moguls are calling the shots for profit, evil robots are shown to control reality through digital dementia, and so on. At some level, conspiracy fantasies are pedagogies of ideology critique, if only a reminder that *one is, or can be, controlled*.

What happens, however, if the metaphorical “machine”—or simply our perception of the machine—changes? What happens when we no longer fear surveillance but actually experience the gaze as a form of pleasurable or compulsory publicity? Or worse, what happens when we are invited to *forget* the machineries of power? Consider the following:

- An intern, working for a group producing a new social networking site, was fired this year for posting on rival site Facebook that he was getting paid to “screw around on IM” and that he was “talking to [his] friends and getting paid for it” (CollegeRecruiter.com, 2006).
- Stadium operations worker Dan Leone was fired by the Philadelphia Eagles organization when Leone changed his Facebook profile status to read that he was “devastated about [Brian] Dawkins signing with Denver . . . Damn Eagles R Retarded!!” (ESPN.com News Services, 2009).
- In Switzerland, a woman was fired by her employer, National Suisse, when she updated her Facebook status on a day when she claimed to have a migraine and couldn’t work. She was turned in, the fired worker claims, by a faux Facebook friend, who she guessed was actually National Suisse management (BBC News, 2009).
- Closer to home, at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Sloop called a member of his staff on the phone and asked, “How do you like your job?” when he noticed that her Facebook information box revealed, “Ask me how much I hate my job.”
- Recently, Josh was summoned by the chair of his department with an e-mail titled “trouble,” which concerned a heated Facebook exchange—with the “F” word frequently used—between Josh and a graduate student about what is and is not appropriate to discuss about work in social (as opposed to professional) spaces. In an underhanded move, the student printed off the exchange and took it to Josh’s department chair.

At the risk of prolonging the obvious, one more story may serve as the best representative anecdote for the subject of this article: In early 2009, 16 year-old Kimberly Swann was working as an administrative assistant at

Ivell Marketing and Logistics Limited in Essex, England. One morning, she changed her Facebook status to read that she found her job boring. She was fired with “immediate effect” when her superiors saw the post. Her boss, Steve Ivell, observed, when questioned by newspaper reporters, “had Miss Swann put up a poster on the staff notice board making the same comments and invited other staff to read it, there would have been the same result.” Brendan Barger, a union representative, countered that “most employers wouldn’t dream of following their staff down to the pub to see if they were sounding off about work to their friends” (FOX News, 2009).

What happened in these cases? Swann, for example, made her observation expecting it to remain outside the eyes of management. Her words, presumably meant to be “private,” ultimately appeared on the imaginary notice board of her employer. After her thoughts circulated in the world of social networking, her employers deliberately disciplined her *publicly*, invoking procedures meant in part to warn others to censor their public discourse. Swann forgot the machine, or rather, presumed the machine’s reach did not extend to her computer screen, set in the supposed “friendly” intimacy of Facebook. As Danah Boyd (2008) put it in “Facebook’s Privacy Trainwreck,” “how one behaves in public differs from how one behaves in a family park, even though both are ostensibly public . . . while social convergence allows information to spread more efficiently, this is not always what people desire” (p. 18). Although the disciplining of one’s presumed behavior in private is nothing new, and in some sense Swann’s plight simply swaps out the state with the corporation (we are thinking here of things like sodomy laws, antichoice legislation, gay marriage bans; see Berlant, 1997, pp. 3–6), her inability to remember where she is and to which disparate audience she speaks provides a different set of problematics.

What is different about these stories is *the way in which each individual presumes some invisible yet actually existing boundary exists between intimate sentiment and public being*. Each of these folks miscalculated the locus of such a boundary. If Boyd (2008) is correct that Facebook’s News Feeds “altered the architecture of information flow” (p. 19), it could be that people have simply not yet adapted to this altered flow. Either that, or, as Jodi Dean (2009) more recently suggests, the networked subjects emerging today do so in the context of a breakdown of determining social norms, albeit with expanding controls; hence, “contemporary subjects increasingly lack self-control, in part because they lack a strong sense of self that arises through discipline, and . . . look outside themselves for some authority to impose control” (p. 66; also see Gunn & Frentz, 2010). In other words, there is something about contemporary modes of social networking that makes personal publicity increasingly compulsory, perhaps even trending toward the psychotic.

In this article, we attempt to discern the conditions and consequences of miscalculated or uncontrollable public intimacy. More specifically, we endeavor to think about social networking through a tweaking of Raymond

Williams' (1974) concept of "mobile privatization" (p. 26) which refers to the way in which various technologies—ambulatory, communicative, and otherwise—have steadily eliminated the challenges to public intimacies posed by physical, geographic space and architecture. We argue that as social networking has moved from the desktop computer to the laptop and portable gadget, the traditional imaginary limit of publicity—the home—has become something of a ghost. In other words, mobile privatization has finally eliminated the primary symbol of domesticity with the advent of portable or *mobile* social networking.¹

One consequence of this spectral home is what we term an ideology of *publicized privacy*. We argue that new social networking (and the accompanying technologies)—as a result of ontological/epistemological changes materially encouraged by new mobile prosthetics, ideological fantasies of freedom articulated around mobility, and the habitualized and increasingly compulsory usage of "private" communication technologies—create an ideology and *sensation of freedom* that ironically leads to heightened states of surveillance and discipline. We conclude by arguing for an attention to phantom domesticity as a way to temper the celebratory tone that discussions of social networking seem to adopt in the popular—and, to a lesser extent, the scholarly—imaginary. Although the evolution of social networking technologies to date provide further evidence that what Gilles Deleuze (1995) termed a "control society" is emergent, we argue newer forms of disciplinary power persist in ways that we should fight forgetting (pp. 177–182).

Privatizing Mobility, Mobilizing Privacy: A Review

It would be nearly impossible to begin any enquiry about the relation between communication technologies and mobility without returning to Raymond Williams. Although our thinking is informed by McLuhan's understanding of media as prostheses, Williams' nuanced understanding of the ways in which communication technologies, lived experience, and hegemonic forms articulate into formations of the public and private remains relevant in a digital age. Boundaries such as the one between public and private—both as ideas and as material realities—signify movement; Williams was among the first cultural critics to argue for understanding mobility as

¹ In an introduction to a special issue of *Cultural Studies* focusing on homeland security, James Hay and Mark Andrejevic (2006) comment on the ways in which citizens have been taught to investigate ways that their homes, including their Internet access, can be made more secure. As a result, they note, the wired citizen "finds him/herself faced not only with a further blurring of the line between work, leisure and domesticity, but also between these activities and warfare" (p. 341). Indeed, they go on to argue—and the other articles of the special issue confirm—that a shift has taken place which moves security from the public to the individual, a shift that individuals still find difficult to process in their individual actions. In effect, a kind of phantom domesticity nonetheless continues to labor ideologically.

a mode of communicative mediation (also see Carey, 2009, pp. 155–177; Packer, 2008).

In his well-known treatise, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, Williams (1974) first mentions the term *mobile privatization* in his description of the public technology, which had emerged chronologically after the railway and lighting. These and similar technologies encourage an alteration of both space and time, allowing labor to be more flexible in both dimensions, and setting conditions for a nomadic capitalism that reorganized and reshaped community and “place” (p. 26). The new technologies—notably, broadcast television, “for which no satisfactory name has yet been found”—encouraged an at once mobile *and* home-centered way of living, allowing for “mobile privatization” (p. 26). In short, broadcast technologies allowed the new mobile work force, with “better material conditions and private homes,” a way to have contact privately with the “out there,” to be private and mobile simultaneously (p. 27).

Ultimately, Williams (1974) saw a great deal of social and cultural possibility with broadcast television and other emerging technologies, but it was a potential that was quickly slipping away. Although in the 1970s he recognized great opportunities for change via “inexpensive, locally based yet internationally extended television systems, making possible communication and information-sharing on a scale that not long ago would have seemed utopian” (p. 151), Williams discerned a situation in which corporations, agencies, and attendant states “reach farther into our lives, at every level from news to psycho-drama, until individual and collective response to many different kinds of experience and problems became almost limited to [a] choice between their programmed possibilities” (p. 152). Ultimately, Williams warned that the potential of mobile privatization could only be uncovered through information, analysis, education, and discussion (p. 152).

Williams’ (1974) concerns have been mulled over in critical communication circles ever since their original publication, with much of the scholarly attention roving between utopic and dystopic visions. One of the more widely read rejuvenations of the term was Lynn Spigel’s (2001) “privatized mobility,” a transposition meant to underline the ways in which miniature televisions, especially those meant to be portable, could be used to “keep family and domesticity together even while people were on the go” (p. 121). What is striking about Spigel’s reconfiguration is that, unlike Williams’ focus on technology in lived experience, her primary interest concerned “public fantasies” of the use of traveling televisions in the late 1960s and early 1970s, not so much the way people actually used them (at least not yet). Hence, even if consumers rarely physically traveled with television sets—and there is an argument to be made that very few did—the articulation of the smaller sets with the freedom of traveling with the broadcast information one desires, was and remains a powerful public fantasy of mobile domesticity. Moreover, Spigel suggests the articulation of this ideological fantasy

had numerous implications when read alongside various understandings of gender and the home (p. 123).

Public fantasies of mediated mobility have, however, given way to new mediated realities. In the form of DVD players and LCD screens, proof of the powerful influence of the fantasy that Spigel (2001) discerned is now a built in feature for family minivans and sports utility vehicles. If Williams (1974) helped us understand the implications of having broadcast information brought into the home, Spigel's insights help us understand how the fantasy of mediation went unplugged. Rather than tied to the home, television is now a moveable feast.

In both accounts, however, the physical presence of a domestic space—be it condo or flat, a tent, or a roving family conversion van—encouraged the enjoyment of the mobility fantasy with a clearly discernable, physical limit—quite literally, a door. In the late 1980s, of course, Joshua Meyrowitz (1987) saw the fantasy coming for the door, but it was still possible to close it. In his powerfully prescient study *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* (1987), Meyrowitz argued that “electronic media have combined previously distinct social settings, moved the dividing line between public and private, and weakened the relationship between social situations and physical spaces” (p. 308). What happens, however, when mobilized privacy is no longer dependant on a door in space, which is the primary architectural feature of any home, temporary, moving, or stationary? What happens when this boundary is reduced to the physical body itself? The answer is that media meet—and mete—at the locus of the orifice.

Newdity

In thinking about the idea of a doorless privacy, we are led to confront how contemporary public fantasies of mobility reflect and inform changing communicative experiences, a kind of new nudity or “newdity,” if you will. As we subsequently explore, the interanimation of new media as prosthetic, public fantasies of freedom and omnipotence, and increasingly compulsive habits of usage collectively encourage users to develop a sense of mediated expression that they wrongly assume (at least until disciplined) to be external to surveillance. The physical markers of private space, signified by all things “home,” is contributing to the erosion of the kind of conspiratorial surveillance fantasies—“welcome to the machine”—that would keep unbridled personal expression in check. Without the real *and* metaphorical governance of the door, a newer experience of freedom is encouraging the publication of privacy, *now* understood as the expression of temporary emotions and judgments irrelevant of one's immediate, spatial environment.

This new form of fearless, naked speech, this newdity, has reached its upper limit in *public privates*, most familiar in terms of the circulated “sex tape” that has, of course, transformed at least two private individuals into

public celebrities (viz., Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian). Web sites such as Xtube.com, which feature a social networking component, are the most conspicuous instances of publicized privates in the United States to date.²

Understood, then, as three elements of an emergent social formation (media prosthetics, public fantasies of omnipotence, and compulsory habits of usage), we suggest that this ideology of newdity encourages, although does not demand, the publication of privacy. However, and ironically given the overarching ideology of freedom, it is a privacy fraught with the dangers of public discipline that work to stabilize identities. In other words, we see in varieties of private publicity an encouragement to break with decorum and norms that ultimately serve the purpose of remarking and reinforcing those very norms.³ This is why focusing on public privates, such as the circulation of amateur sex videos, fails to capture the nuanced ways in which various structures of power encourage—then discipline—transgression: Many of those who publicize their sex acts attempt to limit circulation, wear masks, or attempt to avoid shots of their faces, indicating to some degree an awareness of the disciplinary consequences of surveillance. What is more instructive is to understand how the conjuncture of prostheses, fantasies, and compulsions make for miscalculated public intimacies, such as personal disclosures on blogs or tweets.

MOBILE PROSTHETICS

Over the past several decades, those who attempt to understand cultural changes through the prism of communication media have shown a tendency to do so by drawing a few quotations from Marshall McLuhan while warning readers about the dangers of technological determinism. Indeed, Raymond Williams (1974) makes this move, explicitly shunning McLuhan's determinism and rightly suggesting that changes in consciousness are the product of multiple "causes" (p. 130). Although we are tempted to pursue a lengthy digression to defend McLuhan against these charges, there is little denying (a) that his work overemphasizes the role of media technology as determinant and (b) that it underemphasizes the roles of other forces.⁴

That said, we are hard pressed to argue that media usage does not have a direct—and material—dialectical interanimation with the body. First, prosthetics mediate at the locus of the body's openings to the world—most

² Perhaps the most intimate publicization of privates concerns a new Internet trend: couples creating and publicizing videos of their having sex—but with the camera placed inside the penetrated cavity.

³ Again, Jodi Dean (2009) argues that in neoliberal society, "[i]n their online communications, people are apt to express intense emotions, intimate feelings, some of the more secret or significant aspects of their sense of who they are" (p. 33). They do so, she notes, because of the illusion of a free space of expression.

⁴ We point to Ronald Deibert's (1997) *Parchment, Printing, and Hypermedia* as a rendering of McLuhan's thinking that is in line with our own understanding.

conspicuously the eyes (screens, pages), ears (speakers, earphones), and mouth (microphones, mouthpieces), but also the skin (shoes, keyboards) and the other orifices (whose respective media are not difficult to conjure—hubba hubba). In other words, media meet the human body at its many fleshy entrances and exits. Hence, our second observation: The use of any means of communication materially alters the body (and its movement) and strongly encourages a change in the way we understand our world and our identities through the expansion of the body in space and time. Media are prosthetic (the telephone and the train alike are, observes Freud in a McLuhanesque moment, forms of “autoamputation”; see Ronell, 1989, pp. 84–94).

Our bodies are materially altered by the usage of all mobilities to the degree that they depend upon, and act in dialectic with, media. In the simplest terms, as Cresswell (2006) observes about human ambulation, mobility always affects, and is affected by, the material body:

Human mobility is an irreducibly embodied experience. Our feet may hurt as we walk, the wind might blow in our face, we may not be able to sleep as we fly . . . Mobile people are never simply people—they are dancers, and pedestrians, drivers and athletes . . . (p. 4).

Hence, when we concern ourselves with technologies that *move* the body and/or become the body, the materiality itself is one aspect of the change, if in usage alone. As a result, mobile media and mobility alter the material abilities/senses of the body and—combined with other factors—encourage particular changes in identity and meaning.

Moreover, unlike old media, the mobile character of new technological interfaces makes the interpenetration of mobility studies and media studies all the more relevant. That is, although a medium like television brought the outside in, the grounded and plugged television set encouraged the body to be stationary while engaging with the medium; the viewer was grounded physically *and* in terms of his or her own reaction (one could not rebroadcast one’s response). Cell phones, smart phones, and other communicative gadgets, however, not only encourage interactive communication of a variety of sorts, but they are, in a metaphorically biotechnological manner, a permanent prosthetic (see Liu, 2004, p. 113). In a recent article on mobile technologies, Hashimoto and Campbell (2008) suggest that as these technologies become more like biotechnologies, “the supposed gap separating the self from the thing dissipates, producing an enmeshment of self, thing, and other. . . . in certain situations, being toward others and things has become ontologically indistinguishable” (p. 547). To the degree that the medium is the message, the materiality of new media devices communicate instantaneous communication, in almost any situation, at almost any moment, at one’s convenience.

Echoing claims made by Marshall McLuhan (1964) and John Peters (2001), both John Urry (2007) and Knorr Cetina (1999) have argued that some areas of the biological sciences are based on the ideal of individual perfectibility, encouraging the development of enhancements that would logically and ultimately conclude in a transcendence of the individual him- or herself (see Urry, p. 46).⁵ We stress again that such arguments are focusing on materiality alone, regardless of the ideology or discourse in which it emerges, while simultaneously not denying that the effects or formations cannot be separated from the discourse or ideology in which and through which change emerges. Indeed, regardless of the particular discourse about freedom or perfectibility through which the medium is understood, the prosthetic itself acts as temporal and spatial extension that alters our understanding of the world and the self. Similarly, when Urry (2007) argues that new media create a “mobile citizenship” (p. 189) that undermines the nation state to the degree that one’s sense of geographic space has been altered, and when Hardt and Negri (2001) see a disintegration of the nation state as a hold on individual identities, each points toward, or assumes, the materiality of the changes wrought by new mobile technologies.

Ultimately, however, our concern is of something of a slightly minor variety of this larger thesis. Even while underscoring the idea that we must avoid technological determinism, we must understand that changes in mobile media, because they are material interfaces with the body, influence both when and where we communicate, and, ultimately, the logics under which we communicate. If we can see the high era of print culture as one of rationality, one of distanced reason and high modernity, mobile media certainly encourage a human subject unhinged from a permanent place, able to communicate what one wants when one wants, encouraged to communicate one’s immediate feelings immediately.

FANTASIES OF FREEDOM

There are many ideologies that romanticize home and the pleasures of sedentarism as a practice, but there is simultaneously a powerful discourse of freedom associated with, and articulated around, all types of mobility (e.g., physical, mental, spiritual, sexual). From the discourses concerning hitchhikers and beatniks roaming the U.S. landscape to Bill Gates’ articulation of a frictionless capitalism (in the road ahead, mind you) to advertisements that ask us where we want to be today, a certain romanticism exists around the idea of movement, and this is a discourse that is closely articulated around the usage of mobile prosthetics (see, for example, Gunn & Hall, 2008).

⁵ Both Marshall McLuhan (1964) and John Peters (2001) argue that the ultimate transcendence of all space and time is an underlying goal or fantasy driving the development and use of communication technologies.

A fantasy of freedom associated with political “freedom” and then rearticulated onto our tools of movement, from automobiles to mobile prosthetics, has not simply been a dream for those privileged within circuits of power, but as Jeremy Packer (2008) points out, is also available to those on the margins. For example, Lynn Spigel (2001) argues that mobile television sets were advertised from their entry into the market as having a type of portability associated both with women’s liberation and economic mobility (pp. 126–128). Moreover, Cresswell (2006) and Scharff (1991) have separately noted the ways in which the women’s suffrage movement within the United States used automobiles as a sign of freedom. Margaret Foley’s car tours, for example, exploited driving and movement as important symbols of gender freedom. As Cresswell observes, Foley “was emboldened by prosthetic subjectivity and the idea of its transcendence over gender” (pp. 216–217).

In his powerful analysis of U.S. laws concerning the mobility of the citizen, Cresswell (2006) argues that the notion of mobility as a right, as “intertwined with the very notion of what it is to be a national citizen” (p. 151), is clearly assumed in public ideology. Mobility is so strongly and romantically tied to citizenship that there is a degree to which to be denied mobility is to be denied citizenship altogether (e.g., the ways in which immigrants and tramps are detained or informally cordoned off; pp. 151–167). What we want to stress is that Cresswell is not arguing simply that the United States has a long history of romanticizing movement and mobility, but that it has become such a dominant assumption in the United States that it is *encoded into the laws of citizenship*.⁶ Moreover, with changes in mobile technologies, the ability to move at will is also so assumed that “this interconnection between the human body and the wider world signals the arrival of the prosthetic-subject-citizen. To be a subject is to be linked and to have an ideology of freedom in one’s movement” (Cresswell, 2006, p. 217).

While Cresswell (2006) stresses the ways law has encoded the articulation of citizenship and mobility, Hashimoto and Campbell (2008) recently analyzed how mobile technologies have multiplied the ways that individuals can fantasize their connections to other people and other spaces (they focus primarily on cell phones but include text messaging). The authors acknowledge the dialectic between fantasy and the prosthetic and argue that although technologies enter a world in which ideology encourages subjects to envision the movement of the individual through ethereal spaces and changing subjectivities as a right, they also (and consequently) work to encourage people to use the same prosthetics to move freely. Hence, for Hashimoto and Campbell, in the United States at least, the ideology concerning mobile communication and social networking coincides

⁶ Cresswell (2006) spends the better portion of a chapter outlining the ways in which “mobility rights” have played a major role in a number of Supreme Court decisions (pp. 150–161).

with the ideology encouraged by these same technologies. Technological determinism and ideological encouragement work hand in hand.

HABITUAL COMPULSION

As Gramsci has taught us, however, ideological encouragement is never total. And as Death has taught us, there are limits to technological determination (see Der Derian, 1998). Today this is no more apparent than in the current “youth in crisis” narrative that Charles R. Acland (1994) identified as cycling periodically in the West. In the most recent version of the narrative, social networking is central: Teenage feelings of freedom and omnipotence, buoyed by the ideology of newdity, are leading to deadly crashes and Internet addictions. “Death-by-text” has become the shorthand for the way in which one cultural narrative (youth in crisis), itself quite troublesome, enacts a critique of another (newdity). At the time of this writing, a controversial, 4-minute British television public service announcement, produced by a police department in Wales, started airing in the United States at the behest of the American Automobile Association (Hibberd, 2010). It features three female teenagers texting while driving down the road and, of course, a subsequent grisly car crash. This contemporary revival of the driver’s education scare film both advances and reflects a tacit critique of the fantasies of freedom encouraged by emergent social networking technologies, but with a curious focus on the dangers of libidinal compulsion: Letting yourself enjoy too much can get you killed.⁷ Or as a number of our parents have said, “Don’t do that, or you’ll go blind!”

This policing of teenage sexuality in death-by-text narratives is instructive, however, because it helps us to see better the way in which fantasies of freedom and the prosthetic character of media come together at sites of bodily excitation, tapping into our tendencies to develop compulsory habits. Who among us has not fallen prey—at least for a short time—to the sensation of freedom and compulsions of digital interactivity? For example, we suspect a number of readers have been unable to resist the frequent checking of e-mail or updating one’s Facebook status in fits of willed procrastination at some point—a compulsion homologous to frequent “texting.” Indeed, the compulsory character of social networking was underscored recently by actor and comedian Betty White, who ended up hosting NBC’s *Saturday Night Live* as a result of a Facebook fan campaign. During her opening monologue White confessed to not knowing what “Facebook was” but, “now that I *do* know what it is, I have to say it seems like a huge waste of time” (de Moraes, 2010). Most compulsory habits are labeled as

⁷ Texting while driving is now a crime in 25 states, and the number of states passing laws against it continues to grow (Governors Highway Safety Association, 2010).

time killers, whether mundane or pathological (e.g., obsessive-compulsive disorder).

Because texting has become the dominant means of communication among youth (Viadero, 2010), research has begun to explore the addictive nature of text messaging and other forms of communicative mobility (Ankeny, 2003, p. 28). Some scholars have called for the inclusion of “Internet Addiction”—inclusive of compulsive text messaging—in the forthcoming edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, the dominant manual for the diagnosis of psychological disorders in the United States (Block, 2008). Although scientific explanations for compulsory communicative behaviors are various, most would suggest that an experience of *pleasure* does not begin to explain the dynamics of habitual behavior, especially insofar as its consequences are painful, destructive, or deadly. As Sigmund Freud (1961) once observed about what he termed “the repetition compulsion,” there is often something about habitual or ritualized behavior that goes “beyond the pleasure principle” (pp. 3–78), something that Jodi Dean (2009) suggests deliberately courts discipline: “Contemporary subjects increasingly lack self-control, in part because they lack a strong sense of self that arises through discipline and . . . look outside themselves for some authority to impose control” (p. 66).⁸ Part of this sense of self of the subject, we suggest, comes from doors and the existence of a physical home, which disciplines subjects to acknowledge the boundaries of publicity and privacy. Consequently, the compulsory habits that seem to orbit social networking and the ideology of newdity can be read as unconscious attempts to discern the limits of autonomy and the locus of the private self without a door.

In addition to the material changes encouraged by technological prosthetics and the ways we think about social networking through the ideology of freedom, then, we are suggesting that our interactions with social networking play out in increasingly compulsory habitudes. Furthermore, as Hashimoto and Campbell (2008) observe, technologies such as cell phones create a sense of space that “is a product of fantasies of pure communication, of perpetual contact, and of the other being present now, without any of the distances and difficulties enhanced by discerning vision” (p. 546). These fantasies, reinforced and remarked in our persistent performance and habitual routines, further contribute to an expectation of perpetual contact, albeit contact with those whom we have chosen. In other words, not only are we compulsively drawn toward continual communication and publicity by habit, but by participating in a network, we also demand the same

⁸ Dean’s framework here is unabashedly psychoanalytic, but space limitations prevent us from a fuller explanation. Her argument is that, if we are shifting from a disciplinary society to one of control, subjects are longing for the limits imposed from external authorities; alternately stated, from a Lacanian perspective we are talking about the demise of the paternal figure (see Gunn & Frentz, 2010).

of others. We seem to be unwittingly compelling each other into habits of miscalculated—if not disastrously distracted—intimacy.

THE CONVENIENCE OF PUBLICITY, OR, THE THRILLS OF NEWDITY

All told, we are suggesting that social networking has entered an imaginary space in which its use as a tool to enable the subject to be extended in space and time is encouraged, both by the technology itself and by the cultural ideology through which it is understood. When we combine the altered materiality of the body, the ideology of freedom, and the increasingly compulsive habits of computer/writing usage that these tap into, we can better understand the publicization of the private as an apparatus peculiar to our moment (one that is radically transforming what is considered worthy of publicity). So, aside from scare tactics, how do we make the apparatus visible? How might we disrupt its more harmful effects and utilize its progressive potentials?

In his recent book, *The Political Life of Sensation*, Davide Panagia (2009) argues that politics “is an activity of recognition of that which is given to the sensible” (p. 6). In a series of genealogical investigations heavily informed by Jacques Rancière, Panagia probes the ways in which politics is a perceptual practice and, significantly, urges us to think through the ways that some events or images can act to disrupt the senses and, as a result, disturb politics as usual. Reading Rancière through Attali (1985) on this one point, the interest for Panagia concerns those moments of hegemonic incoherence represented by “noise.” That is, if hegemonic meanings understood through sensation can be read through music, Panagia is interested in those “sensational moments” of ideological disruption. As Panagia observes, democracy in action is “first and foremost a politics of noise” (p. 48).

Panagia (2009) provides an array of examples by looking broadly for moments of ideological noise, moments in which the world assumed becomes the world rethought, moments when what we see, hear, smell, feel outside the bounds of our expectations and perceptual habits—moments, then, that leave us ripe for new frames of understanding, changed understandings of the world when noise becomes a different kind of music. Panagia points to the publication of the Abu Ghraib photographs as such a moment of “advenience,” a moment when U.S. viewers, especially, were forced to rethink their identity as citizens of a civilized nation when making sense of the photos (pp. 150–153). The pictures were so outside of expectations and so painful to make sense of, that the viewer could experience little save visual noise. It is in such moments of convenience, Panagia claims, that we are given the greatest opportunity to disrupt assumed meanings, to fracture dominant understandings of the world.

Panagia’s (2009) work leads us to think that the merging of (a) new media prosthetics, which are increasingly moving away from privatized

mobility and toward publicized privacy; (b) an ideology of freedom via movement; and (c) increasingly compulsory habits of usage, creates a condition that favors the convenient expression of temporary emotions to a public, which then reads them as permanent or as part of one's identity. That is, rather than moments of advenience, we are interested in focusing on the ways in which convenience encourages the expression of attitudes that provide the speaker with a sensation of freedom while simultaneously placing their comments in the realm of public discipline.

In his review of what he called "the metaphysics of fixity and of flow" (or sedentarist vs. nomadic politics), Cresswell (2006) points to Michel de Certeau's (2002) well-known article, "Walking in the City," to illustrate both everyday nomadic politics and the cultural desire to discipline these politics (pp. 46–48). After working through the metaphors of shortcuts, graffiti, and other signs left by those attempting to circumvent the strategies of city planners, Cresswell observes the following:

[T]he cunning of the nomad allows pedestrians to take short cuts, to tell stories through the routes they choose. These tactics refuse the neat divisions and classifications of the powerful and, in doing so, critique the spatialization of domination. Thus, the ordinary activities of everyday life . . . become acts of heroic everyday resistance. (p. 47)

Like an entire generation of cultural critics, we have always found ourselves taken with the metaphor of walking in the city, not so much because it describes everyday acts of resistance, but mainly because most of these acts and others in de Certeau's repertoire (e.g., making free copies on the office machine, taking time away from the job to play) are not taken by the actors themselves to be acts of resistance. Instead, they are simply acts of fun, acts of pleasure, or acts that simply make life a little easier. For example, when one takes a shortcut through a building where one has no business, one does so because it is easier than going around it. Rarely do we think in terms of resistance against strategies and plans. Rather, there is a sensation of pleasure in taking these actions because they make one feel good in the moment.

Despite de Certeau's sharp observations, we are nevertheless concerned that the logic amplified by Panagia (2009) brings with it all the problems the critical/cultural community has once before worked through concerning the politics of pleasure. For example, Panagia notes of our encounters with the beautiful:

The durational intensity of immediacy in aesthetic experience interrupts the posture of attention that has interest as its guiding objective . . . immediacy disrupts an interest-oriented regime of appraisal, . . . In short, aesthetic experience ungrounds our subjectivity (p. 28).

Although the moments of aesthetic experience that Panagia cited are at times of a more sublime variety than that of the sense of relief at making a private complaint, we are troubled by a politics that reads as fully resistant rather than as having complicated effects. If one is to observe with Panagia that “immediacy interrupts our regimes of perception to the point of discomposing our way of attending to the world” (p. 29), must we conclude “that the immediacy will also disrupt our relations to rule and rule following?” We worry that our disruption of rule following is more often an invitation to disciplinary mechanisms that reinforce those rules (and identities) for both the “disrupting party” and those who witness the events (p. 29).

THAT SLUMMING SURVEILLANCE

In our review of scholarship concerning digital mobilities, we sometimes find the repetition of a claim that contemporary culture has moved from a Foucault-described society of “self-discipline” to one of a more Deleuzian culture of “intelligent control.” For example, in the final chapter of *Mobility Without Mayhem: Safety, Cars, and Citizenship*, Jeremy Packer (2008) argues that we see this shift in emphasis in the ideological “dreams” of error free automobiles, automobiles that are controlled digitally, driver free, to remain at a safe distance from each other. Rather than a society in which individuals must train themselves to be more careful drivers, and hence, better citizens, Packer sees a transition to a system in which the individual citizen/subject has less need for self-monitoring, self-control in one sense (i.e., one need not discipline oneself to control oneself as driver, as surveillance and machinery shape mobility), and therefore more time and energy on production, especially as more and more spaces are reterritorialized as work spaces (p. 270, p. 282).

On this point, John Urry (2007) agrees, suggesting that from the increasing use of novel systems of monitoring, surveillance and regulation of bodies in airports to the surveillance allowed by mobile media, there is now less of a need for a society of discipline as we transition to a society of control.⁹ Moreover, toward the conclusion of his study, *Mobilities*, Urry observes that “not only are people, machines and places on the move . . . but so too are the means of tracking, ordering and governing that are increasingly detached from specific locations and which may well engender a dark

⁹ Similarly, Hashimoto and Campbell (2008) recently argued that although discourse and mobile media as prosthetic (the material and the ideology) work together to give one the illusion of freedom and the fantasy of spacelessness (p. 547), it is the fact that mobile position allows everyone to be located on the basis of the location of their phones (their GPSs), their chips, that give the lie to this illusion. In short, like Packer, they are concerned with a shift from self-control and self-discipline to a shift in emphasis to “locateability” that we forget.

future” (p. 270). Indeed, Urry sketches a gloomy history of new media, noting that users collectively made a Faustian bargain that allowed increasing travel and movement in exchange for knowledge of that movement through databases and digital technologies (p. 275). Urry is implicitly arguing that this history illustrates a move from a society of the panopticon—in which individuals discipline themselves in anticipation of being seen—to a society of security—in which surveillance is ongoing in the aggregate and always possible at the level of the individual (see Foucault, 1995).

We hesitate to take issue with these kinds of claims to the degree that they concern a general shift in cultural discipline. We draw attention, however, to the need for cultural criticism to remain attentive to the ways in which this continued surveillance leads to a different, but still menacing, style of relations between the individual and the totality. That is, the examples with which we began this article, and the argument that we have made, illustrate the ways in which individuals are “encouraged” to “forget” the menacing machine or surveilling apparatus. Recalling that the panopticon works metaphorically because subjects learn to behave *as if* they are always being watched, we have to think about the surveillance of social networking differently. In what place do individuals *not* worry about being watched? The home, of course. Consequently, we have described the contemporary logics of social networking as advancing a kind of phantom domesticity—a feeling of the safety of privacy. In the move toward a society of control, then, we are encouraged to forget the various ways in which norms of decorum and propriety are enforced until, of course, the moment of discipline. We have also suggested that the material changes that accompany new media prosthetics, the sensation of freedom attached to mobility and articulated to an ideology of omnipotence, and the habits of genre, collectively, overdetermine a form of disciplinary amnesia through the misdirection of a publicized privacy.

This cultural shift toward the newdity of publicized privacy, at least implicitly, invites each of us to behave as if our tactics of everyday life go unseen (indeed, as if we are walking around the house in our underwear). In this sense, Rancière’s (1999) concern with the social motto of power, “there is nothing to be seen here” (p. 68), works hand in hand with an ideology that tells the citizen that “there is no way to be seen here,” while keeping him or her under very real surveillance, the machine’s guard effectively staring directly at us while we criticize him. On social networking sites, it may *feel* at times as if we are in the living room or pub—a consequence of mindless compulsion—but in today’s economic environment, we are instead always at work . . . and yet we forget.

Although Packer (2008), Urry (2007), and others may be largely correct that we are transitioning from a society of self-discipline to one of control, it would behoove us to continue to think through those life spaces that function as domains of direct surveillance. It is not simply that the guard may not be in the tower, or that the machine runs itself. Rather, it is increasingly the

case that we are encouraged to forget altogether that the tower or machine exist. Indeed, in some respects the tower and machine no longer exist, as they have completely transformed into a new apparatus of surveillance on the way to control. Nevertheless, the value of criticism lies in its “rememory.” It is not just that our movements can be monitored in increasingly sophisticated ways, but it is also that we are directly seen, and encouraged to forget that we are being directly seen—and this is worth remembering.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: ON MAKING NOISE

In a general sense, we find ourselves in a familiar situation as cultural critics moving toward a conclusion. We assume, and there is nothing controversial or novel in this assumption, that subjectivity and agency are overdetermined, never complete, and always in a state of being remarked publicly, by others and by ourselves. Moreover, when we examine the performance of self in the public sphere of online social networks, we are arguing that individuals are now compelled to express immediate thoughts or emotions through a combination of material (alterations in the prosthetic body), ideological (discourses of freedom and immediacy associated with almost all forms of mobility, but especially as expressed around digital communication), and habituated causes that extend beyond simple pleasure. Further, we have expressed our worry that the sensation associated with such communication, the immediate ecstasy of expression that comes from the breaking of “rules and rule making” and inviting external control (Dean, 2009, p. 66; Panagia, 2009, pp. 29–31), encourages a kind of amnesia and blindness to the consequences of publicized privacy. Our concern with the ideology of newdity points to one area in which the society of discipline is still at work and thus one area where cultural critics should focus.

Outside of offering an explanation that is admittedly limited and incomplete, and outside of making minor theoretical distinctions and fine tuning, what is the outcome of such an inquiry? Of the three elements articulating publicized privacy, we think that as scholars we are unlikely to alter either the direction of material prosthetics or usage on the basis of increasingly compulsory habits. Furthermore, it seems to us that the home has gone spectral, and to start to make better sense of the complex relation between publicity and privacy forged by social networking and related technologies in the present era, we need to start investigating what phantom domesticity portends for the networked subject beyond new forms of discipline. We also think that communication scholars are most likely to have some influence on bringing noise to disrupt the fantasies of freedom and the emerging ideology of newdity. Indeed, returning to the conclusion of Raymond Williams’ (1974) *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, when action is necessary,

its conditions are analysis, information, education, and discussion. A discussion of the limits of privatized publicity brings noise to the ways in which we talk and approach our social networking, cautions about the metaphors we deploy that encourage us to see a public boardroom as a private pub (or the networked public sphere as a water closet).

Williams (1974) observed that television and televisual devices act as the “contemporary tools of the long revolution toward an educated and participatory democracy, and of the recovery of effective communication in complex and urban and industrial societies” (p. 151). Nonetheless, he warned that these could also act as the tools of a “counter-revolution” in which, under the cover to talk about choice,

... a few para-national corporations, with their attendant states and agencies, could rather reach into our lives, at every level from news to psycho-drama, until individual and collective responses to many different kinds of experience and problems became almost limited to choice between their programmed possibilities (pp. 151–152).

Of course, the conditions today differ, and while we do not wish to point to corporations as agents, we do want to suggest that although interactive sites and social networking in general could indeed operate as places from which the “multitude” emerges (Hardt & Negri, 2005), they could just as easily become—under the cover of a discourse of freedom and expression—the locale by which meanings, behaviors, and actions are held in place, as publicized privacy marks one as open and ready for discipline.

Several years ago, Lynn Spigel (2001) warned that “deterministic treatises on technology and its radical effects on daily life are at best simplistic” (p. 139). In effect, Spigel was warning that arguments based on technological determinism obscure larger social questions about the creation of ideological ideas and identities. We certainly endorse her concerns regarding technological determinism in its fullest sense, but we should also cautiously think about the ways technologies can encourage behaviors, especially those which lead to a reshaping of our senses of self, of family, of gender, and so forth. That is, although technological determinism should not provide the answers to these questions, our discourse about it offers one way to encourage others to think through their actions, to more carefully reflect upon the ways in which their actions are encouraged/discoursed by media usage.

If democratic politics is “first and foremost a politics of noise” as David Panagia (2009) argues (p. 42), he sidesteps one productive site of emergence for such noise. Productive noise should not be expected in moments of immediacy, of aesthetic sensation or pleasure, that leads to a disruption of rules and rule following. Instead, it is in the moments afterward, those moments in which rules have been broken and discipline has followed, with “proper ideology” reinscribed, that we critics must place our focus, must

highlight the ways in which the offer of “freedom,” of free expression, is always already illusory. These are the locations where we must make noise that opens eyes and ears to other possibilities.

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